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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS



IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

SEPSIS AND ANTISEPSIS IN MEDICINE.—The *Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin* publishes an extremely interesting paper, by Dr. William Sydney Thayer, which should be carefully read by nurses. He contrasts the extreme care which is taken by the conscientious surgeon in the matter of asepsis with the carelessness of much medical work.

The surgeon has banished hospital gangrene and wound infection from his wards by his own individual, careful, exact prophylactic methods. The physician still allows cases of typhoid, tuberculosis, and influenza to occupy adjacent beds. Flies are permitted to roam about the wards, or in and out of the sick room in private houses, carrying infection. The physician and nurses pass from bed to bed without washing their hands. The regulations for the care of the vessels in the lavatory or the disinfecting of soiled clothing is often perfunctorily carried out, especially when entrusted to orderlies, the bath water is allowed to escape into the drain without being disinfected. All this is in striking contrast to the extreme care exercised in the operating room and in the care of wounds, which has led to the stamping out of wound infection. If each infectious disease could be confined to the case being dealt with and not transmitted to another victim, these diseases would cease to plague mankind.

SALUTARY EMOTIONS.—The *Medical Record* says, in an editorial, that Spitzka some years ago estimated that the mortality from wounds in battle is in the defeated army in proportion to that among the victors as four to three, or even as three to two. Bonnette, a French army surgeon, speaks of the physical intoxication of victory and the extent to which bodily pain can be vanquished by the sense of military triumph. The victorious army defies disease in like measure; it is the beaten army that succumbs to pain and is ravaged by disease. This striking illustration of the power of the mind over the body shows the importance of encouraging cheerfulness and hopefulness in a patient. To awaken emotions of courage, and faith in the skill of the physician or surgeon, may turn the scale in the patient's favor. It is a part of the nurse's duty to help to produce this favoring environment.

DISEASES CURED OR IMPROVED BY COLD AIR.—*American Medicine* says that malaria is benefited, even if not cured by cold air, relapses

occurring in hot weather. Dysentery and other intestinal diseases show the same peculiarity. The results of cold air in tuberculosis are well known. Cold air is beneficial in tetanus; guinea pigs infected with the germ may not develop the disease if kept in cold air; hot air hastens the appearance of the symptoms. As for therapy, cold air is now as necessary as quinine or mercury, and every hospital must be equipped. In a short time it will be a mere routine. As to prescribing the degree of cold to be maintained in the ward, it will then be done by the turn of a valve, without altering the ventilation in the least.

The reasons why cold air is curative have not yet been discovered. Cold air has more oxygen, requires fewer respirations and less heart-energy, both of which are vital matters when the heart is laboring. Cold withdraws the blood from the surface and renders more available internally. An anæmic person thus makes his blood more effective and may actually need less. The bracing effect of cold air on the nervous system is well known. The blood pressure in cold air should be studied, as it may be the key to the problem.

PHYSICAL THERAPEUTICS.—Dr. Mary Arnold Snow, in a paper published in the *Medical Record*, urges that physical therapeutics should be more dwelt upon in the medical journals and urged upon the medical profession. She defines it as the treatment of disease by those natural methods, in contradistinction to drugs, which assist or correct nature in her efforts to restore a normal condition. It includes electricity, radium, light and heat, hydrotherapy, mechanotherapy, and diet.

Electricity is a most potent agency. It comprises the constant, or galvanic current, the interrupted, or faradic current, the static, the high-frequency and the sinusoidal currents, as well as the X-ray. Radiant light and heat represent the employment of the electric arc, the incandescent light, the mercury vapor lamp, the actinolite, the solar arc lamp, the Finsen apparatus, the Minn blue light, arc light cabinets and incandescent bath cabinets.

The value of heat in the treatment of inflammatory conditions has long been known, and moist or dry heat applied. In joint inflammation and sepsis it is the treatment of choice. Many an arm and leg might have been saved had the value of hot air treatment been fully understood.

Hydrotherapy includes the study of the action of heat, cold and other uses of water of varying temperatures externally and internally. It is used in all conditions demanding better elimination.

Mechanotherapy indicates manual or instrumental manipulation of the parts of the human body. It includes massage, therapeutic exercise and mechanical vibration. Activity is essential to well being, but to

attain results exercise must be prescribed intelligently for the cure of a pathological condition.

Dietetics is a study of foods as regards their elements, properties, nutritive value, purity, and adaptability in the treatment of disease in order to establish and maintain a normal balance.

These measures of cure apart from drugs should be more generally studied by the surgeon, neurologist, laryngologist, internist, gynaecologist, dermatologist, and genito-urinary specialist.

RHEUMATISM AND AN UNQUESTIONABLE REMEDY.—Under the above title, Dr. Lambert Ott writes in the *New York Medical Journal* of a remedy which he has used successfully for the relief of rheumatism, sciatica, and gout. It is acetylmethylenedisalicylic acid, which, if it becomes popular, we trust may be prescribed under some shorter name. It causes a rapid subsidence of the swelling and fever and a consequent abatement of the pain. In the chronic rheumatic conditions where the joints have become stiff and almost ankylosed from the enlargements following persistent attacks, mobility has been restored to the joints and their size decreased by its use. It has been given for six months, or a year, in daily amounts of from 90 to 120 grains, with specially beneficial results.

SALVARSAN IN TYPHUS FEVER.—*The New England Medical Monthly*, quoting from a Spanish medical journal, reports two cases of typhus fever in which this remedy was tried. In the first the temperature was 39.2 Centigrade, the eruption was fully out and the patient in a condition of stupor; 0.40 gram of salvarsan was injected intravenously. The fever rapidly disappeared, the general state markedly improved, and the eruption commenced to fade on the following day. Convalescence was rapid. The second case was less severe, although the diagnosis was undoubted. Convalescence was uninterrupted and quick. Both of these patients were women. In two subsequent cases, where the patients were men, the result was similar.

ACTION OF HOT AIR IN GYNÆCOLOGY.—The same journals report the results of the treatment of twenty cases of diseases of the female genital organs with hot air, without other treatment. The patients were placed in the dorso-sacral position and Cusco's speculum introduced, surrounded by a roll of cotton wool to protect the parts. The sittings lasted from 10 to 15 minutes. The current of hot air was directed alternately upon the posterior vaginal cul de sac and upon the iliac fossa. The hot air acts as an analgesic, resorbent and resolvent, augmenting the defensive forces, particularly of the blood.